Sermon Title What a Mess Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2 & 4, 2 COR 1:4-7

* I haven’t been around much. Today is 17th time I’ve preached thus far in 2016 counting all of the worship services.
  + I’ve been in 6 churches, on 10 dates. And glad to be here today
* I am very pleased to now be retired from computer programming for 15 months.
  + That allows time for ministry
* I now lead a weekly class to the guys staying at Hope House on Accountability.
  + I am blessed to have this opportunity to try to make a difference in the lives of these troubled guys
* I also continue to worship and play bingo with the residents of Otterbein Avalon, out on Bunnell Hill Road.
  + It is a blessing to do so – every time I go I receive a new blessing from the residents and from the Holy Spirit.
  + Hafta tell you about Miss Sandy.
    - Miss Sandy, feel effects of aging, is not as sharp as she was 15 years ago.
    - We were partners in bingo game last week and we were losing. I said, “Miss Sandy, we are losing”,
    - “what do we do about it”
    - “I suppose we could cheat, but all our friends are right here and they hear us talk”.
    - Shhhhhhh and place a couple bingo markers on her board.
  + I’ve been going there since December, most of the time as the sole representative of our church.
  + I invite all to join me to share in the blessing
    - To share in spreading in God’s love
    - To share in receiving a tremendous blessing
* Here, Pastor Suzanne and family moved into the district parsonage last week and kids are enrolled in Milford schools. She has begun her ministry with the district.
* Pastor Amy and family have moved into parsonage here.
  + Nathan and Timothy have begun school in Springboro system
  + little Rachel will be in Bright Beginnings.
  + Pastor Amy will be in the office this week and she will preach next Saturday and Sunday.
* **How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.**
* With that quote, let us take a look at the messiness in life of saying goodbye
* **Saying goodbye**. Sometimes, we can’t let go.
  + Think of young sweethearts on the phone
  + “you hang up first, no, you hang up first”.
  + This goes on for a several minutes.
* **Saying goodbye**. Sometimes we give instruction.
  + Like to a teen driver about driving safety.
  + Like Carol tells me – specific chores.
  + Like to children at bed time “sweet dreams”.
  + Or Jesus in Matthew 28 and the Great Commission Go and make disciples
* **Saying goodbye**. Sometimes it is quite impersonal.
  + No emotional at all
  + Like the flight attendant on a flight when all leaving plane “buh bye”.
  + Or when you say goodnight to your boss” ‘night”.
* **Saying goodbye**. Sometimes new excitement joins goodbye sadness
  + Kids get on the bus for the first time and head off to school
  + When we drop off our kids at college
  + Kids leave home to begin military service
  + Kids, well hardly kids anymore, off to new job in new city
* **Saying goodbye**. Sometimes it just hurts
  + Like in Matthew 26 in Garden of Gethsemane – Jesus, while in prayer, said he was sad, it’s as if I’m dying
  + Or Saying goodbye to those close to us, before long separation
  + Or Saying goodbye to dear loved one, when death is close at hand
* **Saying goodbye**. Sometimes it is spectacular
  + John 21
    - After resurrection and before he ascended into heaven
    - quote “Jesus did many other things as well. If all were recorded I imagine the world itself wouldn’t have enough room for the scrolls that would be written”
* How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye, so hard
* That is a mouthful of a sentence
* But so poignant
* To have a relationship so good, so important, that it hurts to say goodbye is indeed, precious
* It makes me wonder how God must feel when we leave
* Now we don’t move to another faith
* Or take a new job that causes us to stop believing
* But we do sin
* Remember that the Greek word harmartia, which Paul uses in his writings to mean sin
  + literally means to stray from the path
  + Or miss the mark
  + So when we stray or miss the mark, it’s as though we are leaving God
  + Imagine the pain that causes
* Not here to inflict guilt, but to make us think,
  + what pain of separation we must cause when we stray from the path
  + and what pain we must feel ourselves when we move away from God
* So for all that is good in life
  + Saying goodbye is hard
  + Can be messy
* Difficulty in saying Goodbye got me thinking
* Hebrew people, then Jewish of today may have it better, using Hebrew language, or Yiddish if you prefer
  + That language has a much better word than goodbye
  + Shalom
  + Shalom has many meanings
  + Shalom can mean Peace, harmony, wholeness
  + Shalom can mean Hello
  + Shalom can mean Goodbye
* Hello, goodbye, peace, all in one word
* For 20 years now, I have been moved at this time of year
* For I remember what it was like when Carol and I changed from having life centered around daughter Leah’s schedule to having a very empty nest
  + It’s been a very fast 20 years
* My sentiment for parents seeing kids head off to college is centered in
  + The words, “I can’t wait”
* 20 years ago, During the college College selection process, Carol and I heard constantly from Leah
  + “I can’t wait”
* Throughout the spring of 1996, “I can’t wait”
* That intensified in June and july
  + I can’t wait
* She was ready to leave
* Then came that August date, 1996 when it was time to move into the dorm
  + And we heard, I can’t wait
* I feared that day, for many reasons
  + Sure, our only kid was moving away
  + But the move itself worried me
  + How will we get the refrigerator, desktop computer of 1996, clothes, supplies, up to third floor dorm room?
* During the 4-hour drive to Evansville
  + I had those thoughts
  + Carol had her thoughts of joy and sadness
  + And in the back seat of the car, I can’t wait
* Then we arrived on campus, and the worry about how to move all of Leah’s stuff was replaced by a very different feeling
  + For there at University of Evansville, waiting for us, it seemed
  + The fraternity guys were gathered in the parking lots helping all of the women students move in
  + Glad to have the help, but as I say, that gave Dad a new angst
* Got all her stuff upstairs, Mr Tech support installed computer, made online connection work
* Everything was in order, stuff was packed away
* And Miss “I can’t wait” surprised me so….
  + For she said,
  + Do you hafta leave now?
  + shalom
* So we stayed a while
* 20 years later, I still chuckle at I can’t wait
* And ever since that whole 1996 experience,
  + I’ve had a warm place in my heart for parents as they see their kids grow up
  + I want to be Sensitive to joy/concern wrapped in changes that come to our kids’ and parents’ lives
* Even when Miss “I can’t wait” becomes “do you hafta leave, yet?”
  + shalom
* but this begs the question, When do we leave?
* What question
* No, I don’t want to leave, but if it is the right time,
  + Shalom
* Don’t want to see dear loved ones die, but when the illness is so advanced,
  + Shalom
* Don’t want careers and interesting time with co-workers to end, but when it is time,
  + shalom
* Don’t want others to see their careers take them other places, but when it is time,
  + Shalom
* Springboro, being where it is located, we have seen fair amount of families move in, then move out of this church as careers advance
  + shalom
* Several friends, Bible study classmates, choir buddies, softball teammates, join us, then when the time is right, move on.
  + Shalom
* So back in 1974, Pastor Melvin Alkire was in the wedding service when Carol and I married, right there
  + Shalom, Pastor Alkire
* I sang in the choir with Pastor Lowell Scheufler. He was even on staff at my high school when I was a senior – that was 11 years ago
  + Lowell was a geologist when he heard God calling him
  + Turned to the ministry
  + Ultimately earned D-Min, first of 3 with title Dr in my time here
  + Shalom Dr Scheufler
* Gary Hughes succeeded him, quite the character. Gary and Vangie were friends, served here in mid-80’s
  + We lost Pastor Gary yesterday, but he is reunited with Vangie
  + Shalom Pastor Hughes
* Ron Christly was an interesting guy. He flew planes for USAF, in combat in Viet Nam. Then later while in ministry, he and wife Vickie served as Foster Parents for a host of needy children. Such a good man
  + Shalom Pastor Christly
* Jim Sands, Patty and their daughters were here about 9 years.
  + Such a good man
  + All-state football player Ironton high school
  + Played tackle, and was team’s MVP
    - Not many tackles become team MVP
  + I so admired Jim and his faith
  + He and Patty did the Happy the Clown bit that was so funny. Patty, as the clown, didn’t speak, so Jim had a running commentary during their bits
  + Then of course, we were with Jim and Patty when they lost their daughter Joy in the terrible car accident
  + Shalom Pastor Sands
* All of these pastors are now in their heavenly home
  + Shalom, men of God, shalom
* Then Mark Shimer was here for another 9 years or so
  + Mark played trombone
  + Is my age, actually 5 weeks older and as such, last senior pastor for me who is older than me
  + Such a good guy
  + Carpenter
  + School teacher
  + Did D-Min work in Grief management
  + Learned so much from him about being with those who mourn
  + Shalom Dr Shimer
* Then when Mark and Peggy left, we were introduced to Dr Suzanne Allen, her Australian husband, their 3 year old son and newborn daughter.
  + Fast nine years
  + Suzanne’s D-min emphasis was in preaching.
    - Obvious in her sermons
    - If you attended multiple worship services in weekend, you could see how she tweaked the message for each crowd
  + District parsonage is 5 or so minutes from our daughter’s home
  + May run into them at civic events or at the local Kroger store
  + I will certainly see Suzanne at District meetings
  + Like tomorrow, the Lay Servant Ministry leadership team will meet tomorrow at District office
  + Shalom Dr Allen
* And now, Pastor Amy Haines will be here tomorrow
  + And because of the multiple meanings
  + Shalom
  + Together, we will do good ministry
  + Together, we will make some mistakes
  + Together, We will learn to care for each other
  + Together, we will worship the Risen Christ
  + Shalom Pastor Haines
* The creator of the the Cat in the Hat, Grinch, Sam I am, Dr Suess, gave us these wonderful words about saying goodbye
  + Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened
    - Shalom